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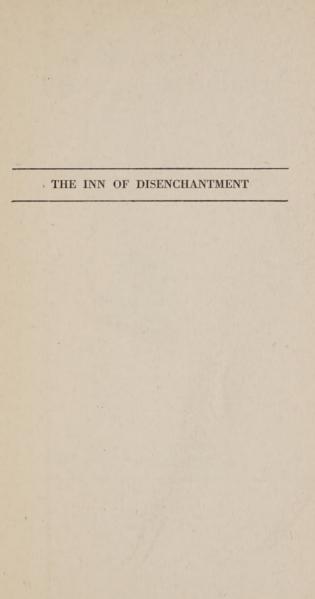


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THE INN OF DISENCHANTMENT

BY

LISA YSAYE



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The Inn of Disenchantment The Princess and the Dragon



THE INN OF DISENCHANTMENT

The Princess and the Dragon

IT was at that most exquisite moment, when it is no longer day and yet not quite evening, when a great and peaceful tranquillity embraces the earth, and when everything that is, quite suddenly and marvelously, becomes transformed into a symbol of everything that might be, that we came upon the little sylvan inn that bore the legend: "At the Sign of the Princess and the Dragon."

Happily surprised to meet just at this hour some of our fairyland friends again, we stepped nearer, and really, over the door of the inn there was hanging a quaintly mediæval picture of the Princess and the Dragon, but oh, it was neither the Princess nor the Dragon of our yesteryears. In a spiteful and malicious mood the painter had robbed them of the birthright of all the citizens of Neverland, of their eternal youth, and the Princess and the Dragon of the inn-sign were both quite, quite old. In the fading light of the evening the wrinkled and bespectacled Princess was knitting on a pair of mittens, the Dragon was sleeping peacefully by her side, and in a corner were heaped up some bleaching bones which once might have been an amorous and adventurous Prince.

Indignantly I turned away and found a seat on a near-by bench. "Never!" I said to my friend. "This

could not happen; it is calumny. Can you imagine . . . ?" But he simply smiled.

"Why not?" he said. "Father Time comes with his magic wand, and the bitter enmity, the burning hate of the Princess even dies away, and as the years go by she becomes quite reconciled to her Dragon. Observe them, how they sit together, talking about bygone times, about the many princes that came, and the Dragon brags a little and says: 'Now, I did give it to them, did n't I?' And the Princess sighs: 'Ah me, was n't I pretty in those days!'-and she hums a song that sounds like our own: 'Combien je regrette . . . ' And later she goes in to prepare the soup for supper, perhaps one of those delicious petites marmites which princesses surely can compose better than any other mortal, and when they sit together at their evening meal she gazes, without doubt, with a kind of indulgent tenderness at her dear Dragon, and I am quite certain that she thinks his profile very characteristic."

I felt almost like crying. "It can't be," I said; "it surely is not so."

But my friend persisted.

"It is so, and it will ever be like this. The painter spoke the truth. The fire of our fiercest protest dies down with the years, and no matter how many princely hopes, how many kingly dreams, how many royal beliefs the old Dragon World might have slain, at last we make our peace with him and we find him quite amiable. At last there comes a moment when we begin to smile with him, a

little sadly and a little cynically, over our own foolish youth, over our own vain and useless struggles. Time slowly guides us to the Great Compromise, appeals successfully to our sagacity, and ere we know it, we are sitting down, knitting mittens and humming a little song."

"But surely," I cried, "there are, there must be, proud and valiant souls that never surrender; that carry on their tragic conflict and reject gifts that are not worthy of them. There must be a Princess who will never look at the Dragon, who will remain young forever, and suffer forever, and glory in her pain."

"Well, there might be," said my friend. But I saw that he did not believe it, and how could I tell him that he would have only to look at me to find one of those proud and unconquerable hearts?

In the mean time the shadows of the evening had stolen slowly upon us and it was time, after the day's wandering, to think of supper and rest. "Come in," said my friend. But I sternly refused. "Into this inn? Never! I would rather stay the night in the woods."

Patiently he sat down again and waited, and while he was waiting I began slowly to reconsider my decision. The night came so quickly and with a vast and unfamiliar darkness, trees and benches grew more and more strange and aloof, and one felt forlorn and lonely in a mysterious immensity. The air was now quite ungently chill and the night dew made the hair wet and stringy. And just in

front of me the windows of the inn were shining brightly and invitingly, and the night wind was wafting to our seat a savory odor of roasting fowls. It was really foolish to carry everything to extremes. Why should I suffer cold and hunger when warmth and food were so temptingly near? Why should I feel lost in the darkness when the cheerful lights of pleasant rooms were beckoning to me? My proud and unconquerable heart became weak and small, and wanted its peace. I sighed, stood up, and silently we walked into the inn. The Dragon conquered.



The True Story of Bluebeard



The True Story of Bluebeard

· I MUST confess," said the Lady in Blue, "that I have always had a certain penchant for Bluebeard. I cut his picture out of my very best fairybook and hung it over my bed as if he were my dearest saint, and I found his long blue beard quite charming. But the best of all was, of course, his secret chamber, and for this alone I should have gladly married him. He was my favorite hero, and not even Rochester could in my 'Jane-Eyre' days deprive him of all my affections. What a pity that there are no more Bluebeards nowadays."

"Why, there are nothing but Bluebeards," answered the Gentleman in Gray, "Real Bluebeards I mean, because the fairy-story is a very incorrect rendering of the actual event. The real version has come to us through newly discovered Hittitic and Chaldaic documents, and I flatter myself on being one of the few persons who know the correct foundations of your beloved fairy-tale."

"Well, then, tell it to me," commanded the Lady in Blue; "and oh, I do hope that the true story of Bluebeard is just as exciting as the one in my old fairy-books."

"It is sadder," said the Gentleman in Gray, "and, consequently, truer. About its terribleness opinions may differ: to some it may seem only ludicrously absurd; others, perhaps, will perceive real tragedy in my version. Being myself no critic, but simply a chronicler, I shall give you the thing without any comment.

"You have heard of King Cophetua, the one who married the beggarmaiden? I am going to speak about his son, Cophetua II, who inherited from his mother certain little peculiarities and eccentricities, quite harmless in themselves, but in their final consequences rather distressing. He had wedded the daughter of a neighboring king, a most charming princess, and bringing her to his palace he gave her, according to the customs of the country, the keys to all the different rooms, and said then with a certain serious playfulness: 'My beloved, this house is now yours, and I beg you to take entire possession of it. There is only one little room to which I keep the key myself, a very tiny little room, indeed, but no one — not even you — must enter this secret and forbidden chamber. As you love me I know you will do what I ask of you.'

"The young queen was deeply impressed. Cophetua was a most agreeable man and she had always rather liked him, but now she looked upon him with new eyes, and he seemed imbued with a strange and mysterious glamour that fanned her love to real passion. What secret the forbidden chamber contained she could, of course, not even guess, but her imagination created for her a thousand possibilities, one more interesting than the other, and Cophetua was changed out of a commonplace, everyday king into a being full of romance and mystery. Whenever there was a slight cloud

on the brow of the king, the young queen said to herself with a little sigh, 'Ah, the secret chamber.' Whenever his mind seemed to wander, she thought him brooding about something in the forbidden room, and as she had decided that the mysterious thing was some deep sorrow or some bitter memory, she did everything a loving woman could think of to make him forget what he remembered so tenaciously. She was of quite unsurpassable tenderness, she had gestures full of allurement, and she found words that were one delicious caress. What wonder that poor Cophetua fell quite madly in love with his little wife and thought himself the happiest of all mortals. But as soon as the young queen saw that her husband found all the delight in the world in her and in

her little person, her pity, her tenderness, her sympathy abated somewhat, while her curiosity awakened and she wanted to know what the secret chamber contained; she wanted to know what it was that her charm had conquered. Several times she begged Cophetua to tell her, but his answers were so unsatisfactory that one day she took the little key from its hidingplace and —" He made an impressive pause.

"And—" repeated impatiently the Lady in Blue.

"Ah, you want me to continue," sighed the Gentleman in Gray. "So be it then. I said the little queen took the key from its hiding-place, walked quietly to the mysterious door, turned the key, opened the door, looked, and gave a shrill scream. The room was

absolutely empty—she saw nothing in it, nothing at all."

"And that is the end?" asked the Lady in Blue.

"It is the end. I could still add that they lived unhappily ever after, that the queen never forgave the king for giving her nothing to forgive, that she treated him henceforth as quantité négligeable, and spoke with a certain asperity about matrimony and married life. But these are things which you can picture to yourself. I gave you the facts and I am done."

"Then permit me to say," exclaimed the Lady in Blue, "that you have told me a very foolish story. If there was nothing to hide, why should there be a secret chamber? And if the queen found no horrors hidden, why should she not rejoice rather than turn

into a shrew? And why did you say in the beginning that all men are Bluebeards nowadays?"

The Gentleman in Gray looked quite bewildered. "You ask too much at once," he protested. "Let me answer one question at a time. You said why should there be a secret chamber if there was nothing to hide? My dear friend, look at us all - who of us has in truth hidden secret depths in his nature, deep wells into which he himself hardly dares to look? Not one in a thousand. As our friend Monsieur Bergeret says, we are 'médiocrement bon et médiocrement mauvais.' And yet who of us is satisfied to be commonplace and uninteresting, and who does not at least hint that there is some chamber in the castle of his being to which he will never surrender the key? And what horror is sharper, what disenchantment more poignant than when the one who rapturously believed in the secret room and all the wonders and terrors of it, at last finds out that there is nothing in it, nothing at all, and when all the charm she dreamed of, all the mystery she guessed at, all the terrors she feared dissolve into the boring emptiness of absolute mediocrity? And was I not thus right to say that we are all Bluebeards? Poor pretenders who know only too well their own shallowness, and yet want to drape themselves in the purple of romance and mystery?"

The Lady in Blue looked deeply dissatisfied. "You may be right," she said, "but I ask you if it is wise of you to tell me such things. I ask you if it is wise to show me that, after all,

you are only a scoffer, and that wherever I see the god you see nothing but satyrs."

The Gentleman in Gray smiled apologetically, and his smile made him, suddenly, look very much younger. "You are right," he laughed; "perhaps it is not wise, but my scoffing, you see, my scoffing is just my secret chamber."

And there was enough jest in his words to make the Lady in Blue smile, and enough seriousness to make her blush, while the little God of Love stood in a dim corner biding his time.





Facts

THE fact is — I don't believe in facts. What is more — a fact is, as a fact, repugnant, hateful, and diabolic to me, and I wish to enter a solemn protest against the dark and sinful factworship of which most of us are constantly guilty.

If you look for something lying and misleading, for something utterly untrue, for something in the deepest sense false, you will find it in every verified and sworn-to fact. A fact may loom up as large as a giant, but examine it more closely and you will see that its back is hollow like the back of some evil elves; there is nothing behind it, it has no meaning, no sense, no significance — it is nothing but a mere fact. To judge

somebody by the facts of his life is the most wicked nonsense a pride-perverted, mechanical, registering mind could think of. As if anything that actually happened could count! As if every fact were not lying with a thousand demoniac tongues! As if the real drama of our life were not played on quite another plane, in a realm to which the world of facts has no admittance!

Facts are nothing but the fuel that nourishes the fire of our soul. Who cares—who, indeed, wishes—to know what kind of twigs, what sort of logs were chosen to build the fire near which we find warmth and delight. If but the flame be clear and strong and pure, and striving upwards to the far heavens and the unattainable skies, we can gladly forgive it even if the wood, feeding that blazing wonder, was mud-stained and

darkened from the dust of the road. Ah! not what happened matters, not what we did, but what we are, what has become of us. Not facts, but effects, are of importance, and if any one should ever dream of writing the story of my life, I beg the kind author now to disregard every fact, to rule out every actual happening, to bar every confirmed event. I disavow completely everything I ever did, and I charge the ghosts of my past deeds to vanish and haunt my memory no more. But if I exorcise and cast off everything I ever did, I stand to the last ditch by anything I ever felt, by the tiniest and most fleeting emotion, by the wildest and most impossible dream, by the vainest and most treacherous hope. And, gentle reader, even though you deny it, it is the same with you. Look back and see

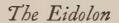
what is left to you from the passing years that ran like sand through your fingers. Facts? Actualities? Or the flavor of one or two unforgotten hours, the haunting melody of a little song, the perfume of roses dead forever, and a last little glimmer of lights extinct? So true is this, that if you want to impress a fact on the human mind you have to do it in terms of emotion. A fact as a fact is utterly absurd, and only if you can tinge it a little with the glamour of feeling, give it in some degree the dignity of a dream, imbue it somewhat with the mystic charm of symbols, only then can our soul look at it without shuddering at its inherent insanity.

Facts are dead, mechanical, and uninteresting, and because they are dead they can be repeated a thousand times; you can do the same thing as often as you may want, but you can never feel the same emotion twice. Everything in the realm of feeling is living, intense, and, therefore, unique and not to be repeated. Every wish, every delight, every dream that comes to you, whispers in your ear: Never again. In the supreme joy of the most enchanted hour you know that this happiness will pass never to return, and overtones of a sad and troubled tenderness swing in the gay laughter of every blissful moment. Never again - never again -that is the message that sings in your heart, and although other cups may be filled for you, the one that delights you now you surely will taste no more. Life, ever changing, cruel, and magnanimous, gives in taking and takes in giving, but it is never twice

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the same, and what is yours to-day is to-morrow gone forever. But facts—these never have what Tasso calls "wings at the heart"; they are what they were and were what they will be, unchanging, heavy, mechanical, dead.

In the scheme of my world there is, therefore, no place for facts. And though I fervently believe in every saint, and joyously believe in every miracle, and solemnly believe in fairy-land, in dreams and wonders, in magic and in witches, in leprechauns, and even in the Fates—in Facts I shall never believe. You smile? You doubt me? Please, don't. I mean it, gentle reader. It's a fact.





The Eidolon

Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, à la chandelle,

Assise auprès du feu, devidant et filant,
Direz chantant mes vers, en vous esmerveillant:
Ronsard me celebroit du temps que j'estois belle.

Pierre Ronsard

DUSK quietly entered the room and spread her gray and filmy shadows ever deeper and deeper over all the old, dear, and familiar things; even the figure of the Gentleman in Gray melted slowly into the darkness that hovered around him, and he soon seemed little more than a shadow himself, only somewhat deeper and darker than those in the other corners, ere the Lady in Blue returned from her visit and at once flooded the room with

the light of electric lamps. She had been gone quite a long time; longer than expected when she had asked her friend to wait for her return, and now, coming back, her face wore an expression in which amusement and disappointment were strangely mingled. The Gentleman in Gray, as he helped her out of her furs, said with a quizzical smile: "Did you enjoy your visit? Have you seen her?"

"Yes, I have seen her, but enjoy—well, I shall tell you all about it. Let us sit here, please, at the fire, and do turn those glaring lights off. Just leave the lamps on the wall burning—yes, that 's right—and now come here and listen."

The Gentleman in Gray did as he was bidden, and soon was seated beside the Lady in Blue, who gave him

a quick and questioning look before she began her tale.

"You know," she said, "I was eager to see her - who would n't have been! The mistress of a poet, and such a poet. His verses possessed not only my heart and soul, but my very blood —there are certain lines of his which I have always felt like a physical caress -and others that made me blush and tremble — they are of a shamelessness so royal, so proud, so insolent, and yet of so surpassing a loveliness that even Swinburne is pale and tame compared with this wild and fiery genius. Swinburne sins more with his intellect, but in his poems there is the dark, red light of a supremely sensuous emotion, an emotion that makes you recoil and yet magically charms and draws you as a snake charms the shy and flutter-

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ing bird. And she is the woman who has inspired all this passionate splendor! All these verses, thrown to the crowd, were in reality intimate confessions whispered into her ear in hours when other mortals have only the gift of silence. Could I expect her to be less of a wonder than the poems that spoke but of her? What a life she must have lived, this woman! How she must have loved! How he must have loved her! What ecstasies she must have tasted! What strange delights must have been hers! Yes, I was eager to see her, doubly eager because she is so very old now. Soon she will be gone and then nobody can tell me more than his books, and yet I somehow felt that there was something more, that some 'wandering air of the unsaid' sang through all his

verses, that there was a last revelation he had not made. I wanted to see her and I dreamed of an hour as Ronsard pictures in his most beautiful lines, — you know them, 'quand vous serez bien vieille,' — and I expected to hear from her, with the accents of a defiant bliss that neither time, nor sorrow, nor the judgment of the world could dim: 'Ronsard me celebroit du temps que j'estois belle.' And at last I obtained an introduction to her."

"I brought about this introduction," said the Gentleman in Gray.

"Yes, and small thanks are due you," the Lady in Blue gave back.

"But why? Was she not amiable? I was told that she is the most companionable old lady in existence. What has disappointed you so very keenly?"

"Everything. The house first of all

—but then one cannot always choose one's house according to one's fate, so I did not let this influence me - but her room! Would you believe it? There is not a single book in this room! Nothing to remind one of him, only a few unfeeling tables and chairs. And at one of these tables she was sitting, and tea was laid, and she welcomed me very graciously, and I had tea with her. First she spoke of the weather, then she asked me about the marketing-prices in my neighborhood and compared them with the sums her housekeeper spends, and at last, after I had given up every hope, she spoke of him. And that was the worst. She told me how much she paid for a pint of her really excellent cream, because 'dear Artie' was most particular as far as cream was concerned, and she had

frightful trouble with him when she tried to serve him an inferior sort. It was not quite the opening I had anticipated, and 'dear Artie' was not just the way I should have wished her to talk of him. Nevertheless, I took my cue and stammered, 'You must have been greatly happy with such a man'; and she nodded her head and said complacently: 'Well, dear child, I can't complain. He was n't a bad man. Of course I had my hands full with him, and it took time till I got him out of his irregular habits, but altogether I have been quite satisfied. Dear Artie was given to colds in the head, and I always had to make him wear his flannels until May. If I had not taken such good care of him he would not have lived half as long as he did, but his family never appreciated it. I had

enough trouble with them, and Artie himself was sometimes as headstrong as a mule, but he was n't the worst by any means, and I won't blame him. I did my duty by him and he knew it —I told him so every day of my life —but I had my cross, my dear'; and then she sighed again, and asked me where I thought black satin could be got cheapest and best."

"Well, I call this quite confidential and companionable," said the Gentleman in Gray.

"Don't joke, please," commanded the Lady in Blue. "Explain to me rather this enigma. I am quite bewildered. Is that the woman he wrote about in words of fire and lines of flame? Was it possible that he did not see how commonplace, how uninteresting, how utterly impossible she is?

Why, she has not even the charm of age or the wistful wisdom of experience. There is nothing in her, absolutely nothing. How can you account for such blindness? Was 'dear Artie' as silly as all this! Oh, I could cry! I think I can never read his songs again; they are utterly spoilt for me. I shall always have to think of his flannels and the cold in his head. Or," she added with sudden inspiration, "is it all a mistake? Was this not his real love? Did he give his heart to quite another woman? Was she whom I saw not the real bride, but only one of the step-sisters who wanted to take the place of the beloved one? Tell me!"

The Gentleman in Gray smiled sadly and indulgently: "The lady whom you saw and who gave you all

the information of which she was capable was verily the famous mistress of our famous poet, but I do not think she was the woman he loved."

"Is that a riddle?"

"Worse; it is the truth. A truth sad and eternal as the vain longings of our lonely heart, and, with your leave, I shall expound this truth to you. You remember, of course, Helen of Troy, Helen of the fair hands, 'white-bosomed, azure-eyed, to whom men forgave all things for her beauty's sake.' She was not less famous than the lady you have just seen, and her loveliness lives in our memory as fresh and fragrant as on the day when Paris gave her the first forbidden kiss. Forever and a day this sweet wraith haunts our imagination, and all the perfume of femininity is crystallized into the

THE EIDOLON

one name, Helen of Troy. Now there was an early lyric poet, Stesichorus, who contended that she who went to Troy and wrought all the havoc in the house of Priam was not Helen at all, but an eidolon, a woman fashioned in her likeness by Zeus, out of mist and light. The real Helen remained safely and with honor in Egypt, and Menelaus had really never the slightest cause for conjugal complaint. Here you have the story of all human love. It is not the real woman we adore, but an eido-lon, a phantasm, that the god in us fashions out of the mist of our desires and the light of our fancy, and the woman who is, is but a symbol for the cloud-bride, for the woman who is not and never will be. It was an eidolon, a phantasm in the likeness of the woman you have seen, that inspired your poet, and it was of the eidolon he spoke in his often too daring, too violent verses. The eidolon he took with him on his perilous journey to all the heights and depths of passion, whereas the real woman lived safely and unsuspectingly in quite another spiritual latitude, in Philistia, and flannels were the matter of her concern. And wherever you find une grande passion, a love and a passion that seem more than human, be sure that they were given merely to a dream, a dream seen as in a mirror in the form of the loved one. She who lived in his house and whom you think unworthy of your poet, she was to him as much a stranger as she is to you. The one he pressed to his heart, the one into whose ear he whispered his songs, the one who gave him all

that love could give to love, that was the eidolon, and the eidolon died with him. In vain you will go and search for it."

"And does one never, never," said the Lady in Blue,—"does one really never love the real woman? Is the real woman never cherished for just what she is? Is there always an eidolon to whom the best gifts of the heart are given? Tell me the truth—are there no exceptions to your rule?"

Her voice was soft and full of temptations, and masculine instinct and dogmatic pride fought in the heart of the Gentleman in Gray, so that he was slow to answer, but dogmatic pride conquered at last. "No," he said, "there are no exceptions. 'Shadows we are and shadows we pursue.'" And then he

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held his hands quickly over the glow of the fire as if a sudden chill had struck him to the heart.

The New Leaf



The New Leaf

IT was Columbine's birthday, and her friends, Harlequin and Pierrot, met before the door of her little, secluded garden-house to offer to her the gifts they had deemed worthy of their beloved. Harlequin was richly dressed as it behooved a man of his affluence, and, fingering the velvet case that contained a magnificent string of pearls which presently he meant to give to little Columbine, he looked with mingled pity and contempt at the poor, improvident, shabbily clad Pierrot, who seemed quite absurdly happy, and who was carrying a long-stemmed, red rose in his hand.

"Is that all that you have for Columbine?" asked Harlequin, and his tone showed clearly how little he valued the gift of his friend.

But Pierrot was quite undismayed. "A rose of Schiras," he said, smiling; "what better gift to offer to one who is a rose herself?"

Harlequin shrugged his shoulders; evidently Pierrot was hopeless—a beggar who could not even be made to see his own beggarliness—and it was of no earthly avail to preach to him worldly wisdom or to teach him common sense.

Silently they entered the little house, but the merry laughter of Columbine did not greet them nor were they welcomed by her cool, clear, flutelike voice. A strange stillness seemed to pervade all these rooms, and both had a queer feeling of an eerie insecurity, when suddenly they found themselves

in the presence of a black-robed, hunchbacked, little medicus.

"Ah, my friends," said the little man, "you come to see beautiful Columbine — yet there was a dark guest here before you, and he kissed her lips so that they have grown blanched in the last and final paleness of this earth. Poor, little Columbine is dying, — like a bird who rests for a moment on a twig before it spreads its wings to fly over dark and unknown waters, so she is still breathing faintly, —but soon, soon she will have left us forever, and only her memory will remain with us. But now, follow me so that her last look may fall on those who loved her best."

Pierrot and Harlequin stepped into Columbine's chamber, kneeled at the bed of the little dancer, and touched her hands, already so pitifully cold. She opened her eyes, looked at them, and smiled, and Harlequin took the string of pearls and offered them to her. She held them — tried to lift them to her eyes, already dim with the shadow of death, but she was too weak. Unheeded the pearls fell to the floor; the hour of adornment was gone; no jewels could tempt her now that she made ready to embark for the shore of another world. "I am dying," she said with the wistful complaint of a child; and Harlequin sobbed.

But Pierrot lifted his beautiful red rose to her and spoke with a fervor, and a passion, and a tenderness that only lovers and poets have at their command: "It may be that you are dying, Columbine, but even surer it is that you will live forever. See this rose, my beloved, and see your picture in it. Its pet-

als may fade, its velvety softness may vanish, but its most elusive, its most mysterious quality, - its perfume, that will last forever. Touch this rose but once and its fragrance stays with you even if the rose is taken from you again, and so - though perhaps you may leave us now, and it will be a little while till we find you again on another shore — the perfume of your sweet life, the fragrance of your loveliness, they will ever be with us. It is only the shell that perishes, Columbine, but the essence of your being nothing can destroy."

And Columbine, who listened as a child may listen to a fairy-tale, took the red rose into her hands, and although she could hardly recognize the form of the flower, the scent was still felt by her, as it mingled with

her breath, and with a last and happy smile she kissed the rose of Pierrot.

After all was over the two friends were sitting in the next room, heart-broken and full of sorrow, and even the proud and self-sufficient Harlequin was, for once, truly and deeply chastened. "Your gift was the better one, Pierrot," he said. "My pearls were worthless and could not give her even a moment of pleasure, but her last smile, her last kiss, were given to your rose. You have chosen the better portion, my friend."

Pierrot put his arm around Harlequin's shoulder and said with his tender and eager warmth: "Then why not follow my example, oh, Harlequin? Are we not dying innumerable deaths? — Must not every hour perish so that the next may live? — Why

shall we burden ourselves with dead treasures and cold jewels, that will slip out of our hands and leave them empty forever? Is it not better to gather living beauty and to harvest imperishable delight! Oh, Harlequin, in this hour of our sorrow I beseech you, forget from now on your futile riches, and do not any longer hoard your valueless gold, but rather find with me that happiness which nothing can take from us, and let us both kneel before the Everlasting Rose."

Harlequin's eyes were wet, and he pressed his friend's hand. "Yes," he said, "yes, from now on a new life shall begin for me. You have taught me much, Pierrot. I see in this hour how vain my life has been and how worthless are all its aims. Now I will follow you, and be your disciple, and

you shall show me the path that the vulture's eye hath not seen."

The friends embraced, and Pierrot felt wonderfully elated, and his heart was full of a melancholy happiness. True, Columbine was dead, but the power of his words had won the soul of his friend, and had saved him from the clutches of the material world. The man in him sorrowed; but the poet, the prophet in his breast, felt as proud as a conqueror. With quite feminine tenderness he took Harlequin's hand, who suddenly seemed to him more completely bereaved than he himself, and said: "Come, Harlequin, let us go out into the garden, in the golden day, and find solace for our tears in the beauty of nature."

"Yes, yes," responded Harlequin; "let us do whatever you say; only

one moment, dear Pierrot, and I am with you." And with these words he went into Columbine's chamber.

Pierrot was deeply touched. Poor Harlequin! He wanted to say another farewell to Columbine, a farewell in a new and better spirit, the spirit that Pierrot's words had awakened in him. The poor poet was so delighted by this thought that he silently and reverently lifted the velvet curtains, which divided one room from the other, to witness a spectacle of which he felt himself to be the author, but dismayed, and with a sinking heart, he let the curtains fall again. For in Columbine's chamber he had seen Harlequin searching on the floor for the dropped string of pearls, and hiding stealthily the recovered jewels in the folds of his clothes.



Cheering a Lady



Cheering a Lady

I AM very sad to-day," said the Lady in Blue, "and my thoughts are for once all gray, gray thoughts. Don't ask me why it is so; there is no reason; but the dark mood has me in its power, and it seems to me that Life consists only of forlorn hopes, of insatiable desires, and of restless yearnings. Even this blazing fire here cannot warm and cheer me."

"Would a nice book be of any help?" suggested the Gentleman in Gray.

But the Lady in Blue shook her head.

"No. It is part of this *malaise* of the spirit that the most beloved books seem old, and hollow, and flat, and of no interest. I think with Mallarmé:

La chair est triste, hélas! Et j'ai lu tous les livres.' Altogether I feel just like Helen of Troy, of whom Leonardo da Vinci tells. She looked in her mirror, and seeing the withered wrinkles made in her face by old age, wept, and wondered why she had twice been carried away. I wonder too. Not that any one has ever carried me away — I have no complaints to make on this score; but I wonder how I could ever think life sweet and the day bright, and the winds of heaven full of softness and delight. To-day the world is gray. 'Il pleut sur le toit - et il pleut dans mon cœur "

"If I should tell you something very gay, would that not cheer your mood a little?" asked the Gentleman in Gray.

But the Lady in Blue energetically refused such help.

"That is the worst you could do," she said. "Do you think that a crying child is cheered when it sees all the other children laughing? Certainly not. But when all the other little boys and girls also start to weep in the most dolorous way, then the first weeper derives at least a little satisfaction. So if you want to tell me anything at all, tell me the saddest story you can think of. Tell me of the friendless and the unloved, the baffled and the broken, the disappointed and the insignificant. I do not want to listen to anything else."

"The saddest story I know," said the Gentleman in Gray, "is the story of *l'homme rouge et la femme verte*—the story of the red man and the green woman. It is a play I saw once in one of the little theaters in Paris, and the utter hopelessness of the plot has haunted me ever since."

"Very well," said the Lady in Blue, nestling comfortably in her deep chair, "tell it to me. And I must confess that the prospect of hearing something exceedingly sad makes me feel very much happier at once."

And after adjusting the lights and stirring the fire the Gentleman in Gray told her:—

"Imagine somewhere in the most dismal slums of a great and pitiless city a vile and reeking saloon. In this saloon, at the stained and dirty bar, stand among other outcasts two derelicts—a man and a woman—in tattered rags, and so broken and forlorn-looking that even the drunkards and apaches who crowd in this desolate haunt of vice chaff them and make

sport of them. The man sips absinthe, the woman has asked for blood-red wine, and, while they drink, one of the company tells them that they would make a charming pair and that they really ought to marry. But both of them reject this idea almost fiercely, and both of them confess to an ideal, which, strange to say, they cherish in spite of all their degradation, in spite of all their vileness and their filth. The woman says: 'Yes, if I could find a man fiery and red as this wine, then, then I could love. L'homme rouge —it is of him that I dream when I wander through the dust of the streets, or sleep with the dogs in some outhouse of the farms. But I never find him, this red man—the world is all gray.' And the man again calls for a green woman, green and mysterious

as the absinthe that has enslaved him. If he could but find her—la femme verte—then he would love, then he would adore. 'But it is not this earth that harbors so wonderful a being.' And while all laugh boisterously at such mad dreams, the two derelicts wander away into the night and all the terrors of the darkness.

"They wandered away in opposite directions, but as they stray, drunk and half-crazed, through the city that had no shelter for them, they happen to meet again just in front of a chemist's shop, which, as you know, has two colored and glowing glass balls over the door—one red and the other green. And chance wills it that the woman should stand under the green glass ball, and the man under the red. They look up, and halt, trembling

with astonishment — each sees his dream standing before him; the woman — l'homme rouge; the man — la femme verte. And then they passionately thank Fate for this wonder they are jubilant that their dreams were not all in vain, that life is not quite a fraud, that the ideal exists and can be found, even if very late and at the end of a most bitter road. Full of an ecstatic happiness, they step forward to embrace, but while they do so they leave the magic circle of the red and green lights, and they stand before each other as that which they really are — two squalid and hopeless derelicts. L'homme rouge and la femme verte have disappeared forever, and the outcasts turn and wander away, only more desolate, more broken than ever before."

The Gentleman in Gray had finished his story, and looked at the Lady in Blue. "Was it sad enough?" he asked.

"Yes," said the Lady in Blue, "it is very, very sad, and it has cheered me wonderfully. And besides this it brings back a truth which, sometimes, I must confess I am apt to forget."

"And will you impart to me the moral which you found in my little tale?" begged the Gentleman in Gray.

"Oh, it is not a moral, it is wisdom," said the Lady in Blue. "Your tale has shown me that — if one should ever happen to be — la femme verte to any one, it is most dangerous to make the slightest move. One must stand quietly and aloof in the magic light of a green distance, never to be bridged, and no disappointment will

ever mar the ideal which one represents. That may be a difficult art, but it is one — "

"Which you understand perfectly," interrupted the Gentleman in Gray, who seemed a little ruffled.

But the Lady in Blue laughed and said: "Thank you so much. That was the one thing needed to make me feel quite happy again. You really understand most charmingly how to cheer me up, and if I should ever again feel the dark mood stealing over me, I shall at once appeal to you."

Yet the Gentleman in Gray did not seem gratified. He said rather ceremoniously that he had to leave, and bowed himself out, not knowing that the Lady in Blue sat long by the fire, smiling at his picture that looked quite red in the glare of the flames.



Sousa



Sousa

SHE loves me," said Harlequin complacently, and tucked a little pink note into his sleeve.

"You really believe it?" asked Pierrot, who had come in to borrow a few pence.

"Why not?" said Harlequin with evident surprise, glancing, self-satisfied, into the big pier-glass of his dressing-room. "Why should I doubt?"

"How wonderful," exclaimed Pierrot, — "how unbelievable almost is the credulity of you practical, you worldwise men! It is only we dreamers and poets that are the eternal skeptics. To you everything is commonplace, so you can accept it without any wonder; to us everything is a miracle, so we tremble

and do not dare to believe. Somebody tells you you are loved, and it is a pleasant fact to you. I — ah, I would never believe that I am really loved. Even in the most enchanted hour doubt comes and assails me, and sadness steals near and sings to me of the ultimate loneliness of our hearts, and of the bitterness of souls condemned to be strangers. Once only, one single time in my life I thought myself really and truly loved, and then, quickly enough the awakening came. If you wish it, I shall tell you the story."

"You will tell it to me, even if I do not wish it," said yawning Harlequin. "That is the habit of you poets. But I have just five minutes to spare ere the hour strikes when my lady awaits me, so you may as well say what you have to say. Who was your dulcinea?"

"The little Pierrette, who traveled with us last year," confessed Pierrot. "You remember her? Her russet hair? Her dark eyes? The charming gracefulness of her slender limbs? She was delightful, and I loved her as soon as I saw her."

"And she refused you?" asked Harlequin.

"No," sighed Pierrot; "worse. She accepted me, but in a way that made the gifts she had to offer valueless in my eyes. Let me tell you the whole thing, and you will see. I have already said that I loved her, and she also seemed to be fond of me. We were much together in those early spring days, and I had reason to think she found pleasure in my company. Yet there was a barrier between us, a certain shyness, a certain stiffness almost,

that was never overcome. The last word was never said. And I waited; waited patiently, as a gardener may wait to see his most beautiful rose break into bloom, or to see his most precious fruits grow heavy, and sweet, and ripe, and ready to drop into his hands. And spring changed into summer, and at last there came an evening when the whole world seemed under a spell. All harsh lines, all glaring lights were gone, and for once earth was steeped in shimmer, and depth, and bloom. Pierrette and I were sitting on the green turf at the back of the circus-tent, and while the silent shadows of the evening were gathering us into their folds, the band in the tent began to play a march by Sousa. I was loath to have the divine, unsung melodies of this perfect evening spoiled by the vulgar and shrill

music of the band, and I was just going to ask Pierrette to wander with me into the darkness and the night and the solitude of wide fields and mysterious woods, when somehow, instinctively, I cannot tell why and wherefore, I felt: 'This is the hour; now she is mine.' I took her hands and they were not withdrawn, and in spite of the vulgarity of the shrill notes that came from the tent and assailed us, and seemed to attack likewise the indescribable beauty of the night, in spite of everything mean, and sordid, and poor around us, I spoke to her, and told her of the longings of my heart. Ah, Harlequin, if ever I was a poet I was one at that hour. I found words that came to me as divine surprise; I found accents that thrilled even me; I spoke with a tenderness that drove tears into my eyes.

I gathered all the poesy of the evening into my words, and poured them out at her feet as a royal gift. And as she listened she trembled with me; she pressed nearer to me, our lips met, and at last, after waiting so very long, I held her in my arms. And while I was thus holding her, I said to myself with the touch of pity which the stronger for the weaker, the conqueror for the conquered, feels: 'This beautiful creature is all mine. I can play on her heart as I can play on an exquisite violin; I can make her smile and tremble. She really loves me, I am her master.'

"Afterwards we had supper together, and while she was sitting at the table, happy, smiling, serene, quite like a pretty, satisfied cat that had swallowed her little mouse, she suddenly said to me: 'You must have been sur-

prised at me just now, by the circus-tent. I am usually not so quick to kiss, but it was that music, that Sousa. Whenever I hear his tunes played I am all entranced; his melodies simply go into my blood. You know, I think him quite wonderful, that Sousa. In fact, I love him. Don't you?' Well, I hardly found an answer. I hurried through the supper, took her to her door, and then, though she seemed surprised, I left her—left her to him."

"To whom?" asked Harlequin.

"To Sousa. It was he who had conquered, not I."

"And you mean to say," cried Harlequin, "that you left that exquisite little girl just because she happened to like Sousa's music more than your silly poetry? Why, you are a fool."

"That may be," said Pierrot, "and

yet, though I regret her to this day, I felt that I could not have done otherwise. I left her, and while I wandered alone through the night, I thought how lonely we are, after all. No one knows anything about the other; we are all strangers. Whatever we possess belongs in the end to some kind of Sousa, and only our longing is ours, and our dream!"

Harlequin shrugged his shoulders, half in pity, half in contempt, and hurried away to meet his lady, while Pierrot sat alone in the dressing-room and looked with unseeing eyes into the blue distances of a world of his own. And in the circus the band began to play the first bars of a Sousa march.

Questions



Questions

O, she is no longer young," declared the Gentleman in Gray, and the Lady in Blue was highly astonished.

"Why, you cannot call her old! She is, if anything, younger than I, and I am certain that she looks even more youthful than her years. So what makes you think her no longer young?"

The Gentleman in Gray looked rather pensive, but at last he decided to defend his verdict. "Did n't you ask her whether she is going abroad again this winter? And what was her answer? She said: 'No! What for?' Now, if one asks: 'What for?' one is no longer young. The hair may be

as smooth, and silky, and shining as ever, the eyes as brilliant and full of mystery, the mouth as sweet and wistful, but the heart has ceased to be young. 'What for' is a question of Age."

"Ah," said the Lady in Blue, "that is good to know. I shall have to be careful. But what, pray, is the question of Youth?"

The Gentleman in Gray settled in his armchair in the happy frame of mind of one who is invited to expound a favorite theory. He relighted his cigarette and begged of his fair friend:—

"Let me begin at the beginning. When we are children we respond to Life's manifold wonders with the naïve and simple question, 'Why?' Whatever is demanded of us then, and whatever is forbidden, whatever is offered

and whatever withheld, whatever we perceive and whatever we are asked to believe, always and forever our question is, 'Why?' In those happy and innocent years we are firmly convinced that there must be a reason behind this bewildering pageant of existence, and in our simplicity we not only believe in a reason, but we even think that such a reason can be given to us, served nicely and appetizingly like a sweet pie on a nursery platter, and we are sorely disappointed when the grown-ups fail us over and over again.

"But by and by we learn. By and by we get older and we understand that our 'Whys' are unanswerable, and we cease to ask them. By and by we even lose interest in the Why of the Things, and when real golden Youth comes and claims us, when Ad-

venture stands at every crossroad and beckons, when all is 'a wonder and a wild desire,' then the 'Why' is forgotten, and with care-free and gallant heart we answer to the call of Life and Love, 'Why not?' Then it is that everything is ours, because we belong to everything that is; even the Impossible is in those days full of Possibilities, and Fear has suddenly taken off her mask, and smiles at us, and has miraculously changed into Wonder. Through dusk and dawn, under the blazing sun and the night-cold stars, before every mystery and every miracle, always our heart sings gayly, joyously and daringly, 'Why not? Why not?' The Present is then ours by right; the Future we feel able to storm by force; even out of the Past come sweet and happy voices, and from

Theocritus of Syracuse to Théodore de Banville who counsels, 'Garde bien ta belle folie,' all Poetry seems only one haunting and happy song to Life and Love and Joy. Oh, you one, you incomparable, you magic time, 'when lutes we strung, and lovelamps in the casement hung,' how is it that you pass so quickly, never, never to return?! Too soon, alas! the fire dies down, and a strange chill creeps into our blood. Whatever we may do, however we may regret it, suddenly the time of delight is gone and we never can

"' recapture
That first fine careless rapture.'

"Just as we ceased to ask 'Why,' so do we now no longer demand, 'Why not?' Reason as well as Unreasonableness, both have failed us, and now we

become cool, detached, scientific, and merely interested in the technique of things. Now we ask, 'How?' and we are almost sure that this question will prove the right key to unlock all the doors of Mystery. And in the beginning it works quite surprisingly well. One door opens after the other, but, unluckily, they only lead to other doors; one riddle after the other is solved, but the final riddle looms up as large as ever, and even when we have understood everything, - everything remains the old enigma. Then it is that we grow tired and weary, that our heart becomes sad and our hands quite desolately empty, and the days come of which we say, 'I have no pleasure in them.' We grow old, and even if Life should once more bind the happy mask before her disenchanted face and try to tempt us with her deceitful gifts, we merely shrug our shoulders and ask, 'À quoi bon?' 'What for?' That is the question of those who have ceased to be young, who have ceased to believe, who have ceased to accept eagerly what is offered to them. It is the last of the questions with which we respond to Life, and when we begin to ask it, the shadows of the evening are already near."

"And," said the Lady in Blue, "what is the answer to this last and saddest question? What do we get in return when we ask it out of a cold and lonely heart? Is there nothing between heaven and earth that takes pity and answers? Are the gods forever silent?"

The Gentleman in Gray had only a smile for her impetuosity. "You

know Heine, do you not? 'Ein Narr wartet auf Antwort.' 'A fool waits for an answer.' Only, usually, we are just such fools, and even in the hour of despair we believe in some corner of our heart that later on, sometime, somewhere, all our questions will be answered and that the answer will satisfy our need. That is the everalluring promise Religion makes to us, and we fondly believe that, though we now see only as 'through a glass, darkly,' we shall later on really see 'face to face,' and that, although we now only 'know in part,' we shall later know 'even as we are known.'"

His voice had at his last words a faint agnostic timbre which the Lady in Blue resented. "Of course," she said belligerently, — "of course we shall. After all, why not?"

QUESTIONS

The Gentleman in Gray laughed. "Here you have it. One speaks to you of the most impossible things, and you say calmly, 'Why not?' Ah, you are quite incorrigibly young."

And evidently deeply disgusted, and yet highly satisfied with himself, he betook himself to his club where men dwell in solitary aloofness, where even "What for?" is no longer demanded, and where, as of the thief who returns stolen goods, "no questions are asked."



Spring



Spring

Que scais-je?

Montaigne

CPRING is for all of us the most alluring season of the year, and the most delightful, because it answers to all our divers moods and satisfies our most inconsistent desires. Nothing is more serene and more shining than the gayness of Spring, and nothing sweeter and sadder than the melancholy of those first perfect days when the air is fragrant with the perfume of young blossoms and musical with the sound of running brooks. The gayness is all of our heart, but the sadness and the melancholy are of our soul. Like sacred and profane love, so the emotional and the spiritual sides of our nature rest side by side, and to both of them Spring brings its gifts. Our heart is light with laughter and happiness and starts to dream of dryad and oread. Pan's flute is heard again, and the divine Huntress and her maids are sounding the horn. With Meleager we sing jubilantly:—

"Now the bright crocus flames, and now The slim narcissus takes the rain";—

and quite instinctively we take our Theocritus in hand to view the perfect days mirrored in the verses of this exquisite and rare poet. The freshness and fragrance of Theocritus enhance the freshness and brightness and the wonderful shining calm of the blue sky above us, and with this beloved poet we listen to Corydon and Battus, while Demeter, the motherly goddess, smiles at her children

"with sheaves and poppies in her hand." But whatever poet we take from our shelf, be he ancient or modern, everywhere we look for the joy, and the gladness, and the light and airy fragrance of Spring. Even those who praise love and the joys and sorrows of love we expect now to be neither heavy nor serious. In them, too, we look for lightness and for the fleet and charming touch of Spring. Herrick's Julia will enchant us in these days more than ever, and even Lord Byron, often so eccentric and so somber, sings quite simply and musically:

"... Since our sighing
Ends not in dying,
And formed for flying,
Love plumes his wing;
Then for this reason
Let 's love a season;
But let that season be only Spring."

And while our heart thus delights in the Spring gladness of a young and pagan world, our soul asks itself the old liturgic question: "Dic nobis Maria ..." Tell us, tell us, what have you found on your way? Our heart revels in the Spring that is, but our soul thinks of the many Springs that are gone and demands to know what message those passing years have brought us, what truth we have found, what hope we dare hold. Was all delight, and all joy, and all beauty, and all gladness ours only for a season, and are the Springs that passed really dead and gone; or is there something left, some elusive essence, that defies death and destruction, and that is not of time but of eternity? The gay and care-free paganism has for such questions only one answer in

the sad and despairing words which Achilles utters, in the realm of shadows, to the wayfarer Ulysses: "Nay, speak not comfortably to me of death, oh, great Odysseus. Rather would I live on ground as the hireling of another, with a landless man who had not great livelihood, than bear sway among all the dead that be departed"; whereas the somber and ascetic Church, that holds the joys of this world in little regard, comes in the last moments to us as mater consolatorix and speaks of resurrection and the life eternal. Where the truth lies — who can tell! As intimately as the joy and the melancholy of Spring are mingled, so closely are doubt and hope interwoven in our breast, and it is not for our hand to part and sever the threads. All we can do is to ac-

THE INN OF DISENCHANTMENT

cept the day and the gifts of the day, and to cherish happiness and sadness alike. And when one of those perfect Spring days ends, and the shadows of an evening, still cool, almost chilly even, drive us back out of the open air to the hospitable fire of the hearth, then we go, perhaps, to old Omar and listen to his wisdom, and a little wearied, and tired, and full of Spring lassitude we say with him:—

[&]quot;Ah, fill the Cup: — what boots it to repeat How Time is slipping underneath our feet; Unborn To-Morrow and dead Yesterday, Why fret about them if To-Day be sweet!"

Grand'ma Ninon



Grand'ma Ninon

I DREAMED last night," said the Lady in Blue, "that Ninon de l'Enclos was my grandmother. In that unaccountable, unreasonable way one knows things in dreams, I somehow knew that she was Ninon de l'Enclos, yet she looked exactly like any other grandmother. She wore a little lace cap, and a rustling black silk dress, and she gave me sugar cookies out of a round, lacquered, Chinese box. Is n't that a silly dream?"

"Not at all," answered the Gentleman in Gray. "I think it was a very sensible dream. If Ninon de l'Enclos had been, in real life, your grandmother, she would probably have looked to you just as you saw her in

your dreams. She would have only been grandmother to you; you would have never recognized the divine Ninon in her."

"But why?" said the Lady in Blue.
"Why should I have been as blind as all that?"

"Not blind," corrected the Gentleman in Gray, "but blinded. Blinded by the nearness of a common life, blinded still further by the relationship which makes a clear view absolutely impossible. It may sound queer to you, but, believe me, no one is so strange to us as our near relatives. We never see in them the individual; for us they are a type. Our grandmother is the grandmother, our uncle the uncle, our nephew the nephew, as we, somehow, conceive the type. And we love best those relatives who con-

form best to the type, and we resent it if there are any aberrations. Grand-'ma Ninon would have been a grandmother; if she had tried to charm you as a woman, you would have revolted at once."

"No," said the Lady in Blue, "you are mistaken. I am not so narrow as all that. Granted that usually one sees in relatives more the type than the personality, I know that I should be clearer-sighted; I know that I would even delight to supplant the bond of relationship by a more human, more friendly, more enduring tie."

"Yes?" said the Gentleman in Gray.
"Well, perhaps, you would. By the way, I have not told you about my nephew John. He has been the cause of much regret to me, lately. He is a medical student, and though he has to

support himself, and to help a struggling sister, yet he insists on giving up medicine, and becoming a poet."

"Oh, I am sorry," said the Lady in Blue. "How unreasonable of him. Did n't you try to influence him?"

"I did," said the Gentleman in Gray, "but he tells me that, in all probability, he will die young, and will never need to be a physician. He says that he does not see why he should study and provide for a future that may never come to him. He thinks it better to write verses which, perhaps, will win him immortality."

"What a queer lad!" said the Lady in Blue. "Send him to me, and I will reason with him, and show him how utterly wrong he is."

"Is he?" asked the Gentleman in Gray; "and yet, the other day you told

me how much you loved in John Keats that complete, that grandiose carelessness which enabled him to give up a profession which, indeed, he never would have needed, and to devote all his brief span of life to his art. In John Keats you admire the proud flinging away of the day for a larger morrow to come; in my nephew John you regret it, and if it were your nephew you would be simply disgusted with him."

"That was unfair," said the Lady in Blue. "You took me off my guard. That is not a good test case."

"It is," insisted the Gentleman in Gray. "Take another case and judge fairly, and you will come to the same results. If Uncle William, now long past his salad days, were to fall quite disgracefully in love with a person below his station, and were to write about

this love-affair a rather indiscreet book, you would think your friends tactless if they mentioned his name in your presence. Yet you have an amused smile of understanding for Hazlitt, and I see the *liber amoris* on your shelf. You spoke the other day with much feeling about Mary Wollstonecraft, and yet I dare maintain that if she had been your Aunt Mary you would have sighed and said that she ought to consider the feelings of the family."

"Perhaps," said the Lady in Blue, unwillingly yielding a point. "Yet what do you wish to prove by this?"

"I wish to prove that we really know only those we do not know, and that those we do know are strangers to us. Some one you have never seen you will understand with a full comprehension, and you will perceive his motives with the utmost nicety of discrimination. But with what exasperation you say: 'Really I can't understand Cousin Jane.'"

"So that we never are on intimate terms with our intimates?" asked the Lady in Blue, "and no one is as far from us as the near ones?"

"Yes," agreed the Gentleman in Gray. "More or less, it comes to that. Of course, there comes sometimes an hour when we suddenly face a marvelous revelation; when all at once the crust of type melts and disappears, and we stand wonderingly before a new and unguessed personality. But then it is always too late to make amends. When one of those near and dear ones, whom we never really know, has left us for ever, when suddenly he goes to lands where we can no longer fol-

low, then we, sometimes, rummage in old drawers or find a bundle of letters yellow with age, and there stands before us a being more vivid than the living one ever was, and, surprised, and with tears in our eyes, we ask ourselves: 'Who would have believed it of poor old Fred?' or, 'Is it quiet, staid Mary who wrote those letters?' Then we try to redraw the picture which time and habit have delineated into our mind; but as long as the final separation is not made, as long as those we know are still near and with us, so long we refuse to know them."

"How sad," said the Lady in Blue; "and yet, sad as it is, there is some truth in what you say. Only I am vain enough to think that in spite of my failure to understand at once your

GRAND'MA NINON

nephew John, I should, nevertheless, not conform to the rule you stated. I think I should be an exception. I think — I am almost sure — I should understand. After all, perhaps, you don't know me."

"Probably," said the Gentleman in Gray, "because you are too near and too dear to me."

And though the Lady in Blue tried to look indignant, yet he saw the smile that was hiding in the corners of her mouth and that seemed to sparkle through her demurely lowered lids.



Psychical Research



Psychical Research

TELL me, why do people persist in reading such things!" exclaimed the Lady in Blue, and pushed aside, with a little, impatient gesture, the newest volume of the "Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research."

"You object to it?" smilingly said the Gentleman in Gray, who had brought her the offending volume. "I somehow thought you would. But what are your objections? Religious scruples?"

"Not at all," said the Lady in Blue.
"Religion has nothing to do with my dislike. It is a natural antipathy. Whenever I see these volumes I feel like a cat that has been stroked the wrong

way. Of course, each and every one of us likes to dream about our ultimate fate. The grand peut-être of Maître Françoys Rabelais is for all of us alluring; but these Psychical-Research People handle such questions, of which the greatest charm is just their vagueness, their elusiveness, in a terribly inartistic and matter-of-fact way. To me they are absolutely like a naughty little boy, who persists in telling the end of a story while all the other children are eagerly awaiting new happenings."

"How unjust you are, and how you wrong my friends!" exclaimed the Gentleman in Gray. "If they tell the end of the story at all, they certainly do not tell it out of naughtiness. They tell it for those of the listeners, who may be frightened and trembling, and who want to be assured."

"Well, I for one do not want to be assured," the Lady in Blue returned. "I delight only in the unexpected. I say with Sancho Panza, 'How pleasant it is to go about in expectation of accidents'; and I shall not allow any one to disturb me in this pleasant occupation."

"Ah, that is all very well," said the Gentleman in Gray, "for the horæ serenæ, for the smiling hours, when we trust in the chances of things. But are there not for all of us other hours too? Hours when we are tired and sick of self, hours lonely and doubt-ridden, when we want something tangible to console our heavy heart? Are there not hours when Beauty seems too brittle, and Youth too fleeting, and Life like an old and dolorous song? And do we not then need an assurance, a certainty more than your pleasant unexpectedness?"

The Lady in Blue, however, was not to be convinced. "No," she said, "even in my darkest hours I have a cosmic confidence which never leaves me, and which does not permit me to read the romance of my ultimate destiny in another way than the one it is written. So take your precious volume with you. It has no temptations for me."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the Gentleman in Gray; "and you are the most superstitious woman in the world, and you simply delight in ghost-stories, and haunted houses, and all such things."

"Yes, of course," said the Lady in Blue. "Those things are interesting and exciting and altogether charming. They are like the Speaker of the Prologue in the fairy-play who appears, and gives delightful and mysterious hints, and says: 'Children, presently

the curtain will go up, and then — then you will see what you will see.' But if you come to me with scientific research, with the probing of documents, the weighing of evidence, and all such dull and dreary stuff, then I do not want to listen. Then I turn away to my delightful ignorance of everything that is to come, and am happy to expect anything, because nothing is certain."

"And you mean to say," exclaimed the Gentleman in Gray, "that if we could show to you, with all certainty, exactly what Life after Death would be, if we could prove to you exactly what you can expect, and how everything is to be with you, that then you would not wish to be informed, that then you would not care to listen?"

"That's exactly what I mean," said the Lady in Blue decisively, pushing

THE INN OF DISENCHANTMENT

the book quite out of reach, and drawing the tea-things nearer. "Let others make sure and join the researchers, and eventually form a personally conducted tour through all the realms of the Hereafter. I beg to be excused. I, for one, do not want to be enlightened. Life is already mapped out enough; everything is made sure and doubly sure, and adventure is forever barred out of our regulated and dreary days. Even Death is absolutely certain, and now you come and want to take away the only unexpectedness left to our heart, hungry for strange and wonderful things. No! I protest! Let others take what route they want, I shall be with those who wish

"'to mount to Paradise
By the stairway of surprise."

The Irrational Lady



The Irrational Lady

HOW foolish clever people sometimes are," said the Gentleman in Gray on a fine summer evening to the Poet, with whom he had just dined.

"You surely do not mean me," the Poet remarked. "I am neither foolish nor clever enough. So tell me, then, what he—no, on second thought I want to make it she, as I am certain you are thinking of a woman—tell me, then, what she did, and let me be the judge."

The Gentleman in Gray smiled pensively, but in his eyes there still hovered a shade of annoyance, and even his voice was not without a touch of irritation as he answered: "You are right, I am thinking of a woman,

a very clever woman, and one whom I know so well that I thought I understood every wayward mood of her, and every slight whim. And yet today I was at a loss, and she seemed childishly foolish to me. You must know that she doesn't live here, but I wrote her so much about the silent beauties of this exquisite little place that she decided to spend at least two summer weeks here, and to-day she arrived. I hastened to her, eager to show her at once all those things I like best — little out-of-the-way churches, the bright river, the dark and mysterious lake, and above all the hills which I love so much that they are quite particularly my own - and do you know what she answered? 'Oh, not to-day, my friend, not to-day. Today I want to unpack, put my pictures up, arrange my pillows, and make it homelike. To-morrow I will go with you and admire everything you have to show me.' Now is not that utterly foolish? Instead of finding her delight just in the newness and strangeness of her surroundings she wants to make it homelike, as if she did not have this homelikeness twelve months in the year. I confess that I cannot understand so perverse a mood."

"But your friend is right," exclaimed the Poet; "she is a thousand times right, and I have now every wish to meet her. Just because she wants to rejoice in the fullest measure in everything strange and new she will find here, she arranges this touch of homelikeness as the one thing needed to heighten and intensify her pleasure. Did not the Greeks have the same

idea when they put the death-head on their banquet-table? And is it not so with our modern society people when they build an ice-skating rink in Palm Beach, or the peasants who expect a happy bride to cry bitterly? You remember the Lady in the 'Decamerone' who demanded of her lover that he make flowers grow in the snow? There you have the same idea, and if I should find a formula for this instinctive desire, I would say that only then can a thing satisfy our deepest need when it is what, according to its nature, it never can be. Just like your friend, we all want to find in a new and strange place the delights of the well-known and the familiar, whereas we make out of our homes a museum that suggests all the charms of distance, and all the marvels of things far away. We want

to find a hint of winter in summertime, and the promise of spring while the snow covers the earth. Our joys are deepest when they are mingled with a sweet pain, and in the purple night of our sorrow our soul finds unheard-of and strange pleasures. Never do we feel life more wonderfully and more intensely ours than when we are under the shadow of death, and none of us ever stood at an open grave without thinking quite instinctively of another life to which this darkness and apparent destruction are but the portal and the gate. And even when we love, our heart follows the same rule and demands the same incompatible properties in its passion, and in the very moment when the beloved is absolutely ours, we want to feel her as unattainable as the stars."

"But that is irrational," remonstrated the Gentleman in Gray.

Yet the Poet had for such objections only a shrug and a laugh.

"It may be irrational," he said, putting on his hat and coat; "but then let me tell you that deep down in our hearts none of us care a rap about rationality. In the depths of our being we are only interested in magic and in wonder, in mystery and in marvels. Rationality is only a fad of philosophers, and even if our heads should ever stoop so low as to contemplate seriously so dismal and dreary a thing as a purely rationalistic universe, our hearts would shudder and turn away. Our hearts know very much better; they see their deepest Possibilities just in the Impossible, and only in the Unbelievable do they care to believe."

These Degenerate Days . . .



These Degenerate Days ...

N a beautiful afternoon in the late August days, three ladies were sitting on the porch of a little summer hotel sipping some cool drinks and doing a little needlework. The porch looked out on the lake and behind the lake one saw dark green hills, and quite far away, at the end of the horizon, blue and misty mountain ranges. The whole landscape seemed to breathe quiet and tranquillity, and the three ladies often let their needles rest, and talked about serene, and happy, and pleasant things, about memories that came floating to them through the summer air, about wishes that had come true, and others that were remembered merely with a smile,

and at last they spoke about the changes of Time and of Youth. They spoke of Youth in a soft and tender way, as if it were a thing far away, and gone long ago, but that was merely a pose. In their hearts they believed themselves still quite young, and they borrowed the cloak of Age merely to set off their charming and unfaded youthfulness. And this is what the first lady said: —

"How time changes! When I was young, I used to wear a little white muslin dress that my mother had made herself, and if it had some tucks, and ruffles, and a nice silk sash, then I felt as beautifully dressed as any princess. Nowadays one does n't wear such dresses any more. Nowadays it has to be pressed velvet, and brocades, and embroidered tulle, with a label of

Francis or Jeanne Lanvin, if it is to be any good. The taste of simple beauty, that is lost."

And the second lady said:—

"And when I was young, and we walked on a fine summer day through the woods, we thought that all the delights of adventure were ours. We knew every tree and every moss, and the birds were our friends, and when at last the day was gone and we looked back upon it, then we thought it simply crowded with the most marvelous happenings. Nowadays nobody walks through the woods. In winter one goes to Palm Beach, and in summer to the North Cape, or to Alaska, or at the very least to St. John's, and if one takes a real vacation one travels to Japan or to India. Everything else is stale, and uninteresting, and without charm. The joy in simple pleasures, that is gone."

And the third lady said: -

"Yes, how time changes! When I was young, and betrothed to John, I was as happy as a queen. When my hand was in his, I felt at home, and at rest, and at peace, and the day he came was a feast-day to me. But nowadays one hears only of elopements, and divorces, of marriage-problems, and sex-questions, of the new woman, and the dangerous age. The art of simple loving, that is forgotten."

And then they sat silent for a while, until the first lady said: "Who is that coming down from the hills on the other side of the lake? Is n't it my Mary with your Jack?"

And the second lady said: "Yes,

they have been in the woods together. See what a lot of flowers they are bringing home."

And the third lady said: "They seem very fond of each other. You'll see, one day they'll be a happy pair."

And the second lady said: "What a pretty little white dress your Mary wears. Did you make it yourself?"

And at this the third lady laughed, and exclaimed: "How silly we are! Here we are sitting and talking how the times have changed, and, after all, it is n't true. Down there you have everything again — the white dress, the walk through the woods, and love. No, times do not change, it is we who are changing. We are getting old, and our appetites are jaded, and our eyes dim, and our hearts full to satiety, and so we demand luxuries, and

distances, and exaltations. But those who are really young delight as ever in the true and simple things of life, which, somehow, have gone out of our reach."

And after this was said the three ladies sat quietly, with folded hands, and looked over the darkening lake into the far-away land of Youth which they had lost, and joy and sorrow mingled strangely in their hearts. They rejoiced that the things once dear to them will be dear to countless young hearts forever, and yet they were sad that they did not belong any more to those who are happy in simplicity, and simply happy. And then they stood up and went into the house, for the air was cooler now and the skies darker, and before they knew it the evening had stolen upon them.

Magic Advertisements



Magic Advertisements

HAVE you ever seen magic advertisements?" asked the Lady in Blue. "Advertisements that read like poetry, or a fairy-tale, and that had all the delicate imagery of sweet and fragile verses?"

"Never," said the Gentleman in Gray. "The advertisements I find in our daily papers—"

"Pray, do not speak of them," interrupted the Lady in Blue. "Rather come here to me and look at this delightful prospectus a French perfumer has sent me. I don't know if his perfumes are perfect, but the names he has given them are quite exquisite. They have the true magic of all inspired things — they made me dream,

and smile, and wonder. Here is the first of them - 'Avril en fleurs,' April in bloom - don't you feel at once the freshness of young, half-opened blossoms, and the crinkly softness of baby leaves? I saw, as in a flash, the lightblue April sky before me with its ever-hurrying white clouds and its unexpected little winds, and I felt the whole scent of Spring in the air. Now is that not a magic advertisement? But that is not the best, by far. Here is another perfume with the charming name, 'Le bon vieux temps.' Are there more words needed to create for you great-grandmother's time, with its potpourri-jars, and its hoop-skirts, its little elegancies, and its faded sweetnesses? Or here: 'La voilette de madame' - can you give me anything more insinuating and coquettish? And thus I could go through the whole list — every name is a little masterpiece. See this one: 'Le jardin de mon curé' — I smiled under tears when I read it, because once I knew such gardens with their wonderful, unworldly peace, and their sweet and simple, oldfashioned flowers. Lemon Verbena grows there, and Mignonette, and Pansies, and above all, the dear Lavender, — and I have only to shut my eyes to be back in the land of long-ago, and to see again such a garden lying quietly and full of tranquillity in the mellow light of a late afternoon. But best of all is this one with its true Gallic flourish and esprit, and its almost elfish roguishness. It goes: 'Voilà pourquoi j'aimais Rosine.' Is this not quite delicious! What better reason could one give for love, and what more valid one! Words can never express the inexpressible, and if you were to explain your love you would only explain it away; but here comes this magician with his marvelous wand, gives us a whiff of some irresistible and captivating scent, and then, with a little bow to his wondering and breathless audience: 'Voilà pourquoi j'aimais Rosine.' What could be more explicit, and yet what more evasive! He gives his whole secret away without letting it lose one of its mysteries! I must confess that I fell quite in love with the name of this perfume, and I shall try to buy it as soon as I go out."

"Oh, never!" cried the Gentleman in Gray. "Whatever you do, don't do this! If you were to ask for it at any counter, you would certainly be told that they were just out of this particular kind, or, if by a strange chance it should be there, the price would surely be forbidding. Better give this little prospectus a place among your bestbeloved books, and it will never lose its charm for you."

"But will mere advertising matter not feel out of place among so elect a company as my books?" asked the Lady in Blue.

"By no means," replied the Gentleman in Gray; "it will feel absolutely at home, and, in fact, it belongs to all those poets, and philosophers, and romancers. What they give you is also nothing but magic advertisements. Magic advertisements of a truth that will ever elude you; of a beauty you will never behold; of a love you will never clasp. They give you charming and tantalizing glimpses

of something that you can never see, nor say, nor touch, and yet you feel it is the one, the only, the true reality. Magic are these advertisements, indeed: tinged with the colors of the rainbow; sweet-voiced like the Song of the Sirens, and quite fulfilled with the pathos of things that are too beautiful. And even while you listen to them: to the grave and gentle wisdom of your thinkers, to the musical passion and melodious playfulness of your poets, to the wistfulness and the charm of your romancers, you know full well that the things they praise so much and so sweetly will never be yours. You know that if you were really to go to the poor old Fates, who are quite well meaning but who keep only a very ill-assorted stock of rather dubious goods, and demand of them

the one or the other of the items you found in your magic advertisements, they would tell you at once that they have not this particular kind on hand, and offer some substitute that perhaps your intellect might accept as 'just as good,' but that will never satisfy your heart. Or, if by a strange and marvelous chance you should, indeed, get what you are asking for, you will soon see that the price is forbidding. For the one perfect hour you will have to pay with all the years to come, and if you are wise you will refrain from so dangerous a bargain. If you are wise you will peruse the magic advertisements of your books as you delighted in the little French prospectus, but never, never will you go in quest of the impossible: never, never will you try to touch this glittering fairygold with your poor, earthly hands: too soon it would turn to ashes and dust!"

"You are right," said the Lady in Blue, "and yet — though I agree with you — nevertheless I shall try to get my perfume as I shall try to get all the promises of poetry fulfilled by life. Your wisdom, after all, is limited: you are just wise enough to be wise, whereas I —"

"Yes?" asked the Gentleman in Gray, a shade too eagerly for a mere philosopher.

"Whereas I," continued the Lady in Blue with a little curtsy, "possess a higher and a more gracious wisdom. I am wise enough to be foolish."

"Is that a promise?" asked the Gentleman in Gray, and he took hold of both her hands.

MAGIC ADVERTISEMENTS

"No," said the Lady in Blue, smilingly withdrawing her hands; "it is nothing but a magic advertisement." And with a little pleased laugh she disappeared, leaving him alone with his vain thoughts and idle dreams.







Arcadia

Ich besass es doch einmal, Was so koestlich ist! Dass man doch zu seiner Qual Nimmer es vergisst!

Goethe

E T in Arcadia ego. Yes, once we, too, were in Arcadia, and the skies were then much bluer, and the grass much greener, and the winds much softer, and the stars much starrier, and the world altogether more colorful and golden than in these sadly disenchanted days, when our abode is Philistia, and Arcady nothing but a dream. Yet a dream so full of sweetness and charm that it challenges all realities, which fade before it and get wrinkled and old. "The things which are seen are tem-

poral; but the things which are not seen are eternal"; and though, perhaps, we will never more behold Arcadia with earthly eyes, and never more see it flooded with moonlight and murmurous with the sound of the mighty sea, yet it is ours forever and the true home of our heart. And the wonder for us is not that we once were in Arcadia; we simply marvel that we should have lost it, that we have wandered so far astray, and that it is so impossible to find our way back. Perhaps our mistake is, as it is the mistake of all the other seekers for Arcady, to look for it always in Space, whereas it is really located in Time. If one wants to draw a map of Arcadia one must remember that one entered into this enchanted country with the fifth year, when one could tell one's self one's own tales and when one began to read one's own books. And as Time wore on, the wide plains, green hills, and dark woods of Arcady were stretched before us, and we roamed there at will, quite oblivious of the dreary lands in which the grownups dwelt. But, charming as Arcady is, it is not a very large kingdom, and in a few years we had come to its uttermost boundary-lines. To be sure, there were some promontories and headlands that reached deep into the years of common, everyday life, and for moments made us feel all the freshness and fragrance of the lost mainland again, but those headlands were few and far between, and usually we knew full well that Arcady was gone. And yet, though it was gone, somehow it seemed quite near; somehow it was just lying before us, and if we could

but make one step, one single, little step, we should be there again and taste all the old happiness anew. But it was just impossible to make this one step. Our feet were too leaden, and our hearts too heavy, and our hands too full with the worthless things we had amassed; and though all the time we saw Arcadia, though we cried with Verlaine, "Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, la vie est là, simple et tranquille," we could not take hold of it; it was ours no more. We had lost the citizenship in the land of wonder and delight. Like the princess who had refused the king and married the swineherd, we sadly sat down on the dusty road and sang, "Ach du lieber Augustin, alles ist hin"; and in the mean time Arcady was floating away, beyond all hope of recovery.

Now Arcadia is lost, and we plod through the desert of a drab and dreary life; but even as the shell, long stranded on the dusty sands, keeps in its deeps a murmur of the sea, so we keep the memory and the knowledge of Arcadia, and we know each other by our common remembrances and our common regret. Et in Arcadia ego no dearer and no sadder brotherhood than those who greet each other with this magic formula, who know that once they have been children of the realm, and that somehow they lost their heritage and their home.

But, just because we are lost, some hope is left for us. Does not science tell us that all lost creatures move in a circle? That those who are bewildered and do not know the way, always come back to the point from which they

started? And oh, who is more bewildered, and more lost, and who knows less of the way to light and peace than we who were once in Arcadia, and are there no more!

And thus it may happen that, just at the evening hour, ere the sun quite sinks and the night comes on, we may once more find ourselves in Arcady. The fading light will shine on all the hills, and plains, and rivers that we loved so much, and what we have known in the glory of morning, we will behold once more under the quiet evening sky. Of a truth, things will be changed; what once was our delight will now evoke but a tender smile, and instead of the splendor of the sun, only the cool and remote light of Hesperus will greet us in the sky; but it will be the land of our desire, nevertheless, and after we

ARCADIA

have wandered long enough over inhospitable ground, we will go like tired children, satisfied and happy, to sleep in Arcadia.

THE END

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